蒼天のサザンクロス

Haru lost.
But still, that loss was really shocking.
That probably happens from time to time.
It's a race where tenths of a second count,
and more so, where athletes representing nations compete viciously...
JPN

Because in that moment,
Haru, of all people, actually...

YOUR ENGLISH HAS GOTTEN PRETTY GOOD.
YOU KEPT NAGGING AT ME TO STUDY
So did you have mackerel for dinner again?
Today I had salt-grilled mackerel, and yesterday was miso-stewed mackerel.
You never change!
I can't tell what they're saying.
WELL I'M NOT GONNA BE AROUND ALL THE TIME WHEN WE GO OVERSEAS FOR MEETS!
YOU JUST NEED TO GET GOOD ENOUGH TO CARRY ON A CONVERSATION BY YOURSELF
SHOVE
It's annoying.
The hotel person is saying something
Rin
Bathroom
BAM
BAM
BAM
Oh yeah,

That reminds me, Rin.
I'm coming over next week,
HUH.
HUUUH?!
"Over"--you mean AUSTRALIA?! What about classes?!
EXAMS ARE OVER SO I'M ON BREAK
But, practice?!
SOLO TRAINING FOR A WEEK WHILE THE POOL IS REPAIRED
BUT, THAT'S STILL TOO SUDDEN! WHAT ARE YOU EVEN COMING FOR?!
...Because I had the time...?
NO, I REALIZE YOU HAD THE TIME, BUT THIS ISN'T A DISTANCE YOU JUST COVER ON A WHIM!

I'VE BEEN OVERSEAS FOR MEETS A LOT NOW, SO I CAN GET AROUND ALONE.
BESIDES, YOU'VE GOT PRACTICE, RIGHT?
Uh
HUH?!
It's all right, you don't need to come.
I'LL ADJUST MY SCHEDULE, SO GIVE ME YOUR ITINERARY
F-FINE, WHATEVER, I'LL COME MEET YOU
RIN.
If something happened to you while you were wandering around on your own–
NNNGGGHH–
You're the one who told me to make sure I can handle being alone, right?
STILL, THIS IS AUSTRALIA, YOU REALIZE?
I'M ALWAYS WITH YOU--
BUT YOU DO UNDERSTAND THAT THE BUSES AND TRAINS CAN BE A HASSLE, RIGHT?

2:05
HARI
Call ended
I don't need you to meet me, so I'll text you when I land.
Bye.
I'm not a girl or a little kid, so stop worrying so much.
AH--O!! HARU!!
I KNOW YOU'RE NOT A CHICK OR A KID!
WHUMP
UGGGH, GEEZ...
EEH?!
国際線

Departures
GEEZ, ALL YOU TWO DO IS FIGHT!
THIS ISN'T A FIGHT
YOU TURNED DOWN RIN'S OFFER TO MEET YOU?!
BUT YOU HUNG UP ON HIM, RIGHT?
irritated
RIN TREATS ME TOO MUCH LIKE A KID
I DON'T THINK THAT'S WHAT HE'S DOING...
YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO GET THE LAST WORD IN, DON'T YOU?

IN MATTERS INVOLVING WATER...
...AND THOSE INVOLVING RIN ESPECIALLY.

chatter
chatter
HARU, THEY'RE BOARDING YOUR FLIGHT!
YEAH.
...NOT REALLY.
BE-BOOP
The flight for Sydney will begin boarding all passengers momentarily.
You're too lightly clothed, even for Australia, Haru
Here, take my coat

HARU!
BYE, THEN.
BYE!
HAVE A GOOD TRIP!
AND GIVE RIN MY REGARDS!
..I WILL.

"YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO GET THE LAST WORD IN."
"DON'T SWIM SO LAZILY!"
"C'MON!"
"COME TAKE A BITE OUTTA ME!"

My body...
...feels
hot.
clench
IT'S MY FIRST TIME WALKING ALONE
ALL RIGHT...

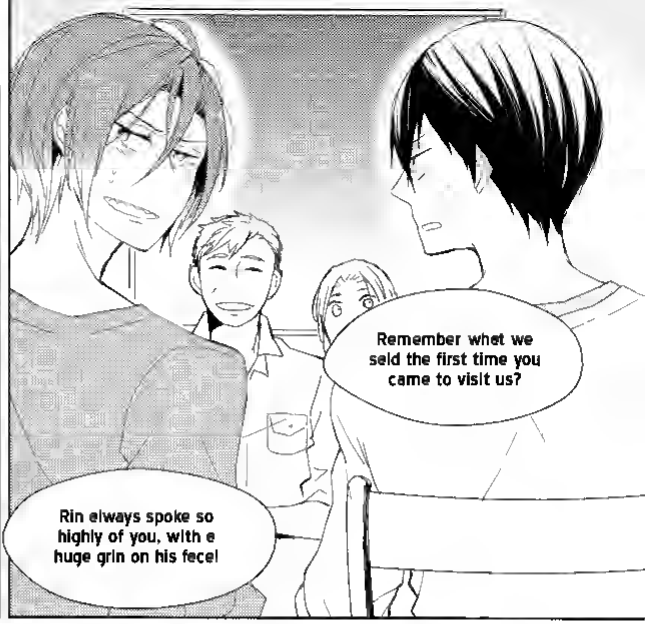
Oh?
I haven't gotten a single text!
WHAT THE HELL IS HARU DOING...?
HE SHOULD HAVE LANDED BY NOW, RIGHT?
beedle deep
Oh??
snatch
Hey!
What's up, Rin? You're checkin' your phone a lot today
Ah, HEY!
Is it a chick? A CHICK??
Shaddup, it's not!
'Haru'? Oh, that guy? The Japanese one...?
I can HEAR you
That glare would make him Rin's boyfriend, huh?
whisper
whisper
Let's tease 'em at the next meet!
Oh
Give it Back!!
SWIPE
Haru?!

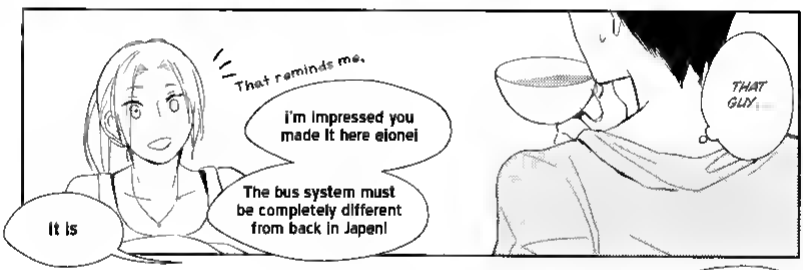
THANK GOODNESS, HE LANDED SAFELY!
A selfie?!
<MESSAGES HARU
I'm here.
beedle deep
IS HE SIGHT-SEEING?
WHAT THE HELL?

I stopped by to visit.
WHA-
WHAT THE HELL IS HE DOING?!
If he's keeping himself occupied, then I can just meet up with him after practice...
beedle deep
JOLT

I'm just THRILLED!
I can't believe you came to visit us!
huff
huff
huff
Sorry for the sudden visit.
Oh not at all! It's just such a shame Russell had to work today!
WOOF!
Looks like Winnie remembers you too!

ALBUM
Your English hes gotten so good, Heru!
Perhaps beceuse you ve been competing in eil those internationel tournaments?
You've been wetching?
But of course! We elways meke sure to catch yours end Rin's reces on the TV!
I see.
For my English .
That tekes me beck to when Rin first errived...
He telked with us eil the time to try end leern more of the lenguege.
...Rin's been teeching me. I cen only under- stend simple phreses right now, though.





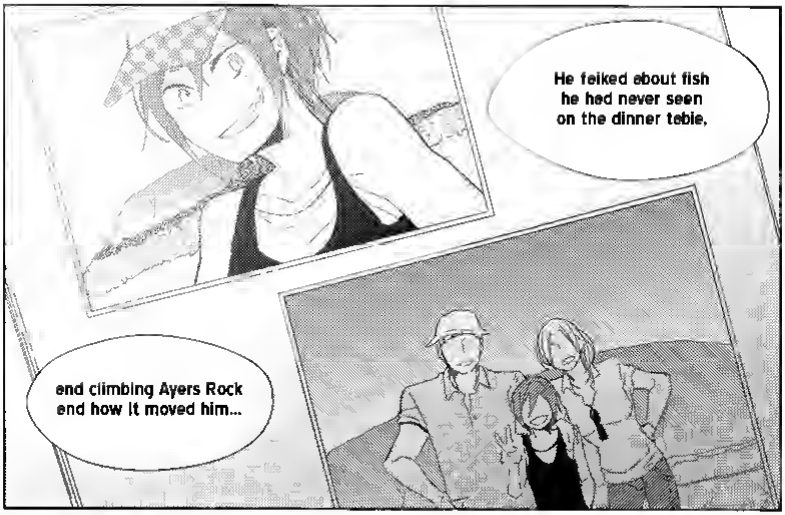
That's right.

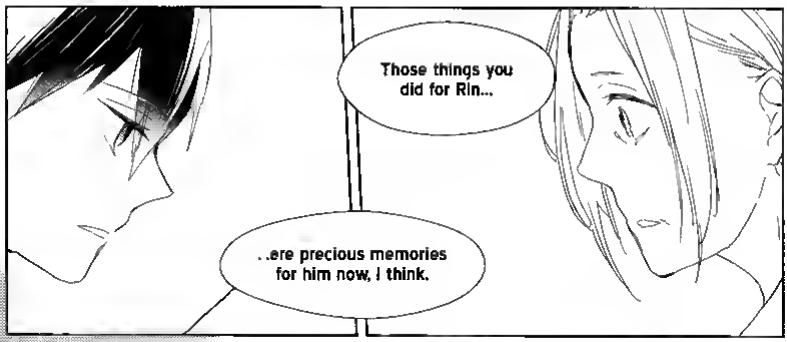
Our plane tickets, the bus, the train, the hotel room...

Rin took care of it all...

Looking back on it now,
Rin really gave me the run-around,
and yet...
I FOUND HIM SUPER ANNOYING.
OH MY!
OH MY OH MY!
he's working so hard here...
Well, Rin...
...is an extremely hard worker.
"Hey, Rin?"
"What kind of boy is that 'Haruka' you're always going on about?"

"Haru is...!!"
I tried my best to be sure he had a happy home to live in...
but he never once spouted a single complaint before us.
Maybe *he* was the one taking care around *us*.
Oh, pardon me! Going on about this kind of thing with you, Haru!
.....
in the past,
Rin wrote me a letter once.

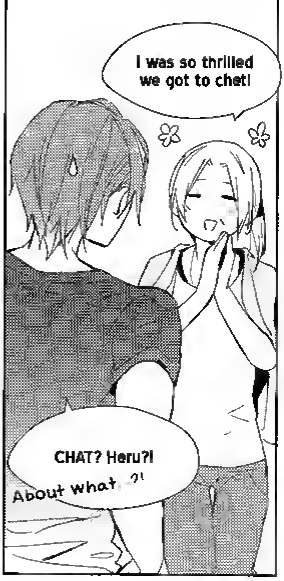

He talked about fish he had never seen on the dinner table,
and climbing Ayers Rock and how it moved him...

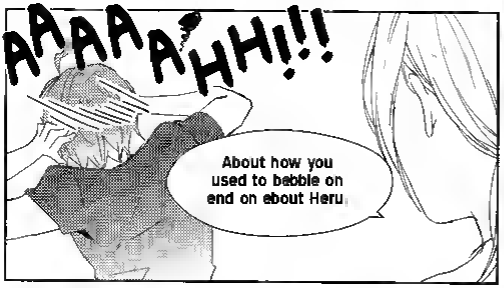

Those things you did for Rin...
..ere precious memories for him now, I think.

Indeed...

Oh my goodness,
Catch your breath!
You're finally living here full time, so do drop in a bit more!
Sorry! I'll come back some other time with that cake you like!
WAIT--
THAT'S NOT WHY I'M HERE!
Haru's here, isn't he??
He wes! He dropped by to say hello!
Hi
Welcome home, Rin!
It's been ages, Lori!

'About what'?


I was so thrilled we got to chat!
CHAT? Heru?!
About what...?!

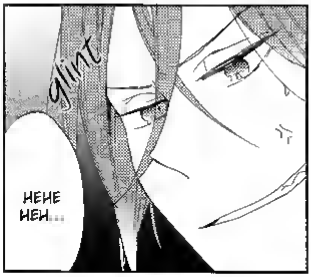

AAAAAHHH!!!
About how you used to babble on end on about Heru.

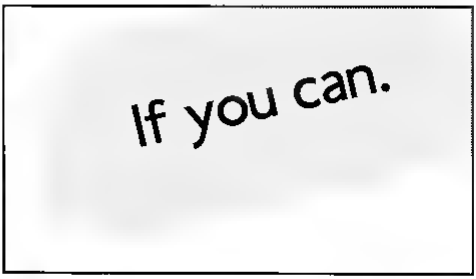
He LEFT?!
beedle
deep

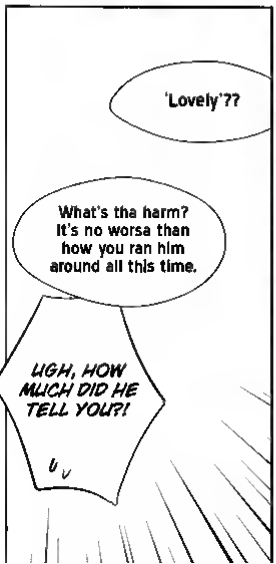
So?? Is he inside?
Oh, he said he had some piece he wanted to visit and left earlier.

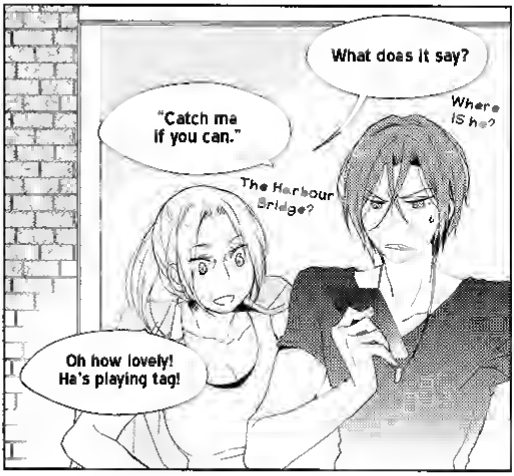
What's he saying?
..It's Heru.

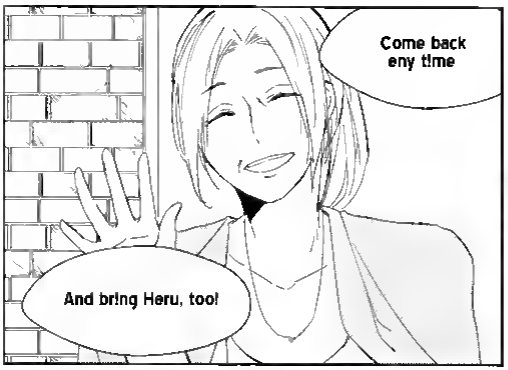
Catch me
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING NOW...
I got a balloon.


glint
HEHE HEH...


If you can.

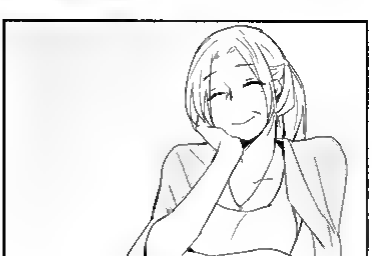

'Lovely'??
What's tha harm? It's no worsa than how you ran him around all this time.
UGH, HOW MUCH DID HE TELL YOU?!

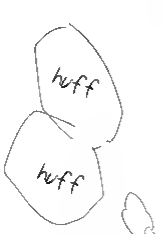

What doas it say?
"Catch me if you can."
Where is he?
The Harbour Bridge?
Oh how lovely! He's playing tag!

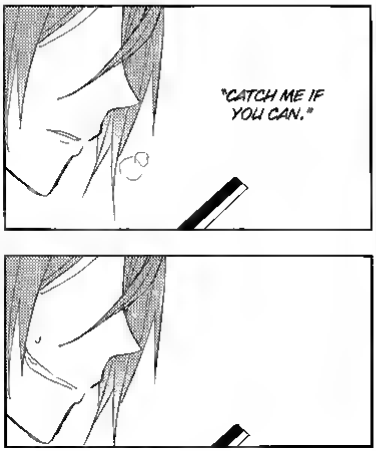

Come back any time
And bring Heru, too!

Sorry, Lori! We'll catch up next time!
That's fine!

You got it!
I'm off, then!




huff
huff


"CATCH ME IF YOU CAN."

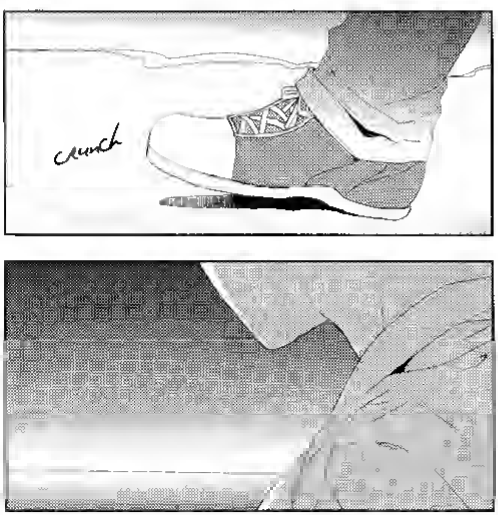
CLANG
HE'S NOT ANSWERING ANY OF MY CALLS
CLANG

YOU'RE ON!

bump
Here you are.
WHERE ARE THEY BEING GIVEN OUT?
BALLOONS

thanks
Nope
HARU!
Whirl
!!
?
HOTEL

I'LL HAVE TO TRY AND CUT HIM OFF...
FROM HERE, THIS DIRECTION, THE NEXT PLACE HE'S LIKELY TO GO IS
FWUMP
WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU, HARU!?
ARGH, DAMMIT!


crunch
SSSHHH...

reach
GRAB

YO, HARU
LOOKS LIKE I FINALLY CAUGHT YOU
rustle

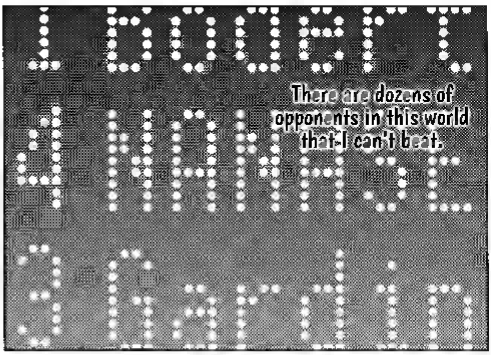
SHUT UP!!
YOU RAN ME RAGGED TODAY!
WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA??
TOOK YOU LONG ENOUGH
YOU MEAN THIS WAS ALL JUST...
WHAT DO YOU THINK? I WAS ABLE TO RIDE THE BUS AND THE TRAIN ALL BY MYSELF
Take that!
AH..
RIN
I'M SORRY
MY BAD
snicker
pfft!
I didn't mean to treat you like a kid
AAUUUGGHHHH
YOU KNOW, I'M JUST WORRIED YOU'LL HAVE A HARD TIME IN AN UNFAMILIAR PLACE ON YOUR OWN SOME DAY!
slump

HEY, HARU?
THERE'S SOMETHING THAT'S BEEN BUGGING ME...
LET'S GO BACK TO THE STATION

WHEN YOU LOST THE FREESTYLE RACE...
AT LAST YEAR'S WORLD CHAMPION-SHIPS...
...WHY WERE YOU SMILING?

I lost.

I'd tried my very best...
...but it still wasn't enough to win.


I DOUBT I WANT TO BE Stardin
There are dozens of opponents in this world that I can't beat.

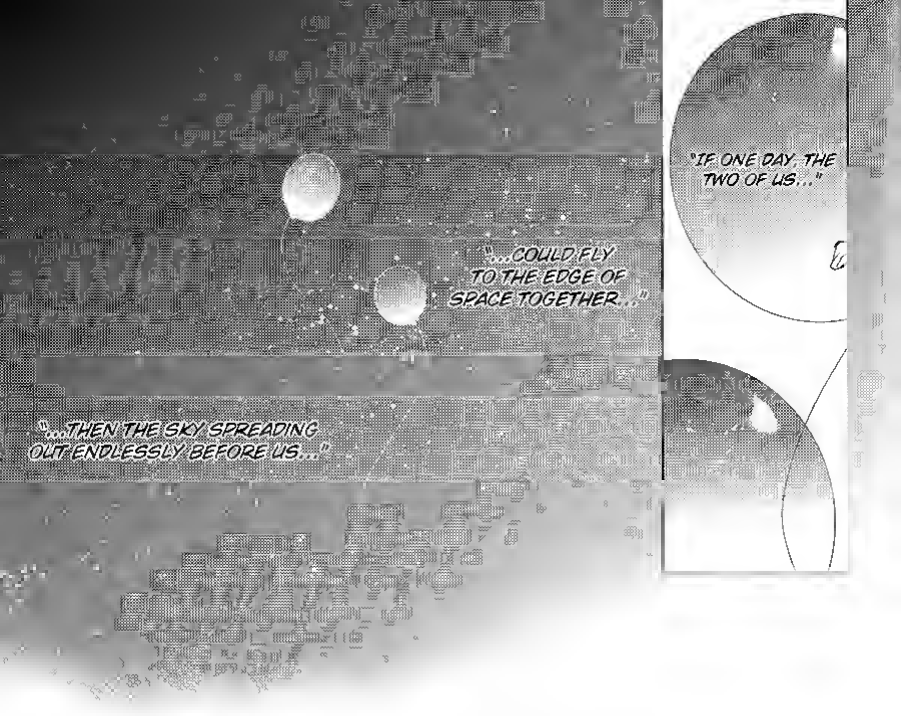
I know this heat.
I feel...hot.
"...WHEN IT COMES TO SWIMMING."
"YOU THINK YOU'RE THE BEST THERE IS..."

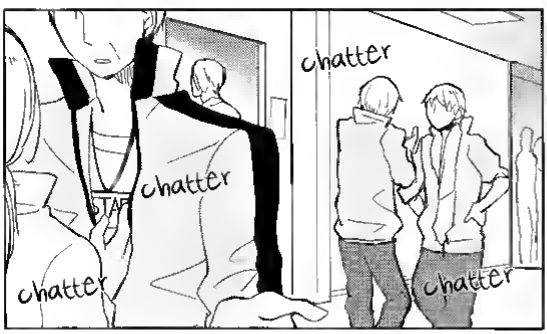
THAT HEAT YOU FILLED ME WITH...
AT SOME POINT, I STOPPED HATING IT
WHEN I REALIZED THAT...
...IT MADE ME WANT TO TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT THE PATH I WALKED WITH YOU...
I SEE...
SO? HOW WAS IT, WALKING THAT PATH ALONE...?
HMM...
IT WAS BETTER WITH YOU HERE
I DIDN'T HAVE TO KEEP GLANCING AT MY PHONE EVERY TIME I WANTED TO TAKE THE TRAIN THEN.
DON'T USE ME AS A MAP.

PLUS...
SWIMMING WITH YOU...
...MAKES ME *MUCH* HOTTER
Heh.
...PRETTY WORDS.

BUT I'VE KNOWN THAT...
...FOR AGES.
YEAH. I WANTED TO SEE IT PROPERLY JUST ONCE...
Oh, th-t?
THE SOUTHERN CROSS?
IT WAS SO DIFFERENT FROM MY OWN LITTLE WORLD.
I ALWAYS FOUND IT STRANGE...
IN AUSTRALIA,
YOU CAN SEE STARS YOU CAN'T IN IWATOBI
AND YOU CAN SWIM OUTSIDE IN FEBRUARY.

SSWW...
YEAH
WELL LUCKY FOR YOU, YOU FINALLY GOT TO SEE IT.
HMM?
SPEAKING OF STARS...
tug
Don't grab me
Enough already! Just drop it, argh!!
tug
Y-YOU JERK! YOU WANNA BRING THAT UP AGAIN?!
IT REMINDS ME OF YOUR ESSAY FROM THE GRADUATION ALBUM.
BUT I LIKE IT.

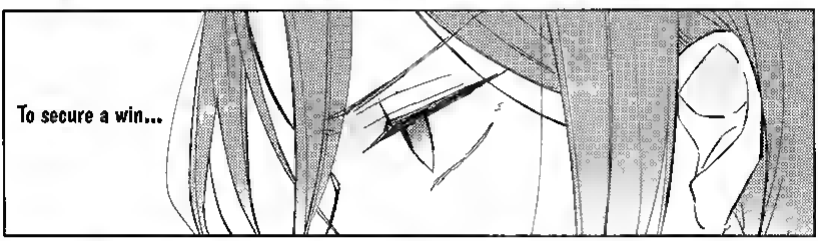

"IF ONE DAY, THE TWO OF US..."
"...COULD FLY TO THE EDGE OF SPACE TOGETHER..."
"...THEN THE SKY SPREADING OUT ENDLESSLY BEFORE US..."

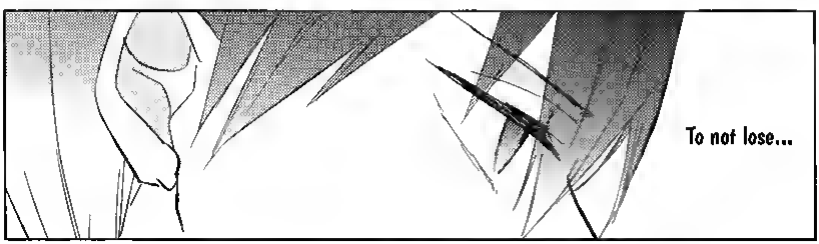

chatter
chatter
chatter
chatter
TAP

CHEERS

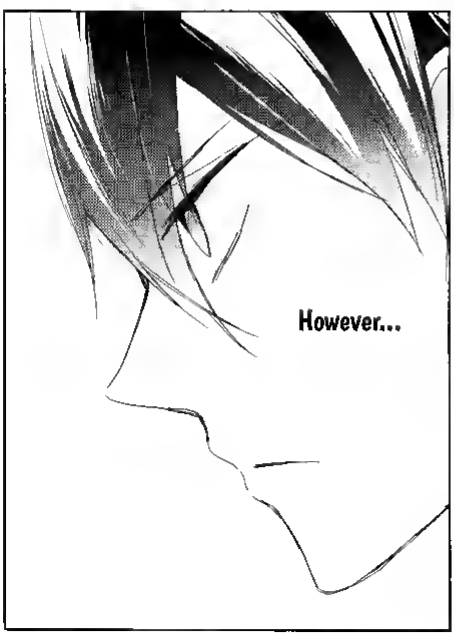
There's Rini And.. that guy, from before!
Oh yeah! "Haru"i
JOLT
Hey!
Rin...!
Let's go sey hii
Yikes! Who wes it who seid they were an item?!
YOU said so!!
intense...
JPN

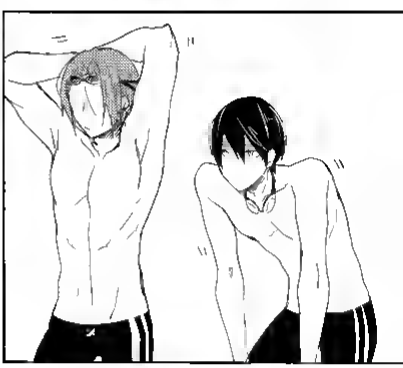
JAPAN
JAPAN
stride

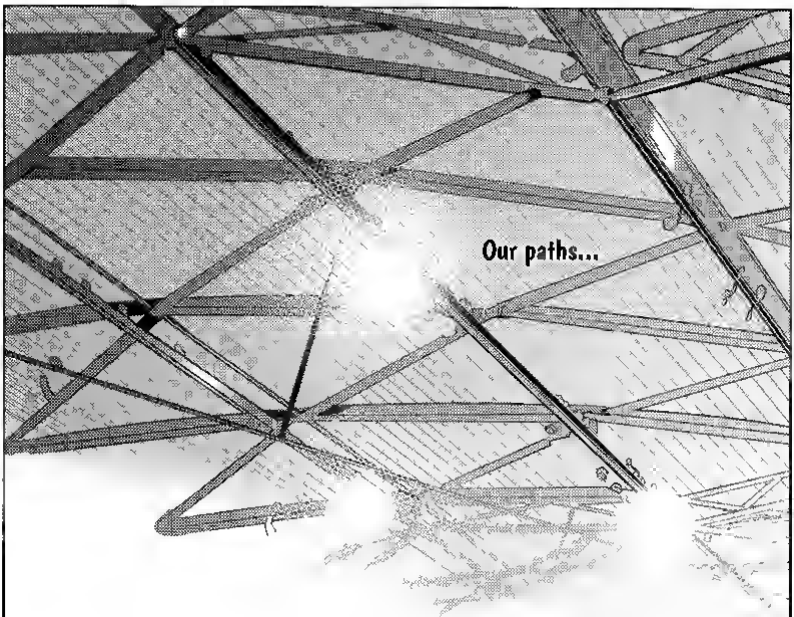

To secure a win...


To not lose...

The paths we walk may
not be exactly the same...


However...





...will definitely meet.

The End.